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ABSTRACT

The advances women have made in the past decade have created the myth that women have achieved equal opportunity in the job market. In reality, the opposite is true. The current economic status of women demonstrates the need for strict enforcement of equal opportunity laws. Department of Labor data indicate that the wage gap between men and women is not narrowing. Despite popular concepts to the contrary, most women are not working to earn extras. Furthermore, men and women doing the same type of work do not earn the same pay. Also many believe the myths that women now have access to all types of jobs, earn less because they do not stay in the job market, and lack the education needed to get ahead. Analysis of Department of Labor statistics also reveals that minority women are still the victims of double discrimination. Finally, examination of current unemployment patterns proves that the large influx of women into the labor force is not responsible for high unemployment. Rather, current male unemployment rates are caused by reductions in male-dominated blue collar jobs, especially in manufacturing and construction. Under the Reagan administration, new agency policies and regulatory proposals have seriously undermined equal opportunity enforcement efforts. If women are ever to achieve equality at work, the national commitment to equal opportunity must be reaffirmed. (MN)

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Women at Work:
The Myth of Equal Opportunity

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Women Employed addresses problems of discrimination and unfair treatment, helps women obtain equitable wages, and seeks improvement in the enforcement efforts of government regulatory agencies. Women Employed programs include action campaigns and educational activities. Through the efforts of Women Employed over the past nine years, thousands of women have won higher wages, better benefits, and promotions.

This case study was written by Women Employed Executive Director Day Piercy and Women Employed Research Director Nancy Krieter.

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INTRODUCTION

The advances women have made in the past decade have created the myth that women have achieved equal opportunity in the job market. Many believe that women now receive preferential treatment in hiring and promotions. Others assert that government programs to enforce equal opportunity laws are no longer needed because employers have established non-discriminatory policies which guarantee equal treatment for all employees. In the debate over the Equal Rights Amendment, some opponents argued that constitutional protections for equality for women are unnecessary because women have already achieved equal pay for equal work and equal opportunity.

Although some women have made gains in the past decade, the vast majority of working women are still relegated to the lowest paying jobs in our economy. As opportunities have expanded for some women, the number of women in poverty has increased. Further, even when women and men work in the same occupations, women earn less than their male co-workers. Sixty-seven percent of women working full time make less than $15,000 per year compared to 30.6 percent of men. Only 2 percent make over $30,000 per year compared with 20.9 percent of men.

The reality of women's economic status demonstrates the need for enforcement of equal opportunity laws. The decade of the 1970's can best be characterized as a decade of access, when lawsuits and government enforcement efforts established legal precedents for equal

opportunity and equal pay for equal work. These legal actions created expanded opportunities for women to be treated equally with men in the job market. But much more needs to be done to achieve economic equality for working women.

This report reviews women's current economic status, analyzes the myths and realities surrounding it, and documents the need for comprehensive programs to enforce equal opportunity laws.

PROFILE OF WORKING WOMEN

Labor Force Participation

By June, 1982, there were nearly 48 million working women in the civilian labor force, accounting for approximately 43 percent of all workers. An increasing majority, over 52 percent of women aged 16 years and older are now part of the work force. While men's labor force participation rates have declined, rates for women have increased dramatically. In the past decade, women entered the labor force at an unprecedented rate, averaging over 1 million net additions per year. In fact, working women accounted for 65 percent of the growth in the labor force during this period.

Of the 48 million, 7.8 million (16.5 percent) are members of minority groups. Approximately 52 percent of all minority women are now in the labor force--a percentage that has remained stable over time. In 1948, the proportion of working minority women was 46 percent, only slightly lower than it is now.

Marital Status, Working Mothers and Children

Fifty-five percent of working women are married, 25 percent are single and 20 percent are widowed, divorced or separated.

Today, mothers are more likely to work than ever before. The number of children with working mothers has grown by more than 5 million since 1970, despite a falling birthrate and the consequent reduction in

the total number of children in the population. In March, 1982, 55 percent of all children under age 18 (approximately 32 million) had working mothers. Fifty-eight percent of all mothers with children of school age (18.4 million) are working, a 44 percent increase since 1940. Nearly half (49 percent) of mothers with children under the age of six are now working, compared to 30 percent ten years earlier; a record 8.5 million children below age 6 (45 percent of all pre-schoolers) have working mothers.

The number of families with children under the age of eighteen which are headed by women is also increasing. Since 1970, families headed by women have increased 64 percent, by 3.7 million. Today, 16 percent, or 9.7 million, families are headed by women. Fully 14.8 million children, one out of every four, live in families where the father is absent (10.5 million), unemployed (2.4 million), or out of the labor force (1.9 million). More than half of all black children, more than two-fifths of Hispanic children, and one-fifth of white children live in one of these situations.

Since 1970, the number of families maintained by a divorced or separated parent has increased 111 percent. One parent families accounted for 21 percent of families with children in 1981 compared to 11 percent in 1970. The vast majority (90 percent) of these one-parent families are maintained by the mother. Currently, 20.1 percent of all children live in a single-parent household.

Families Maintained by Divorced or Separated Parents, 1981

(In Thousands)

	Total		White		Black	
	1970	1981	1970	1981	1970	1981
Maintained by mother	1,727	4,061	1,183	2,968	533	1,013
Maintained by father	212	509	171	428	40	70

Source: Bureau of the Census

Sixty percent of the women family heads are in the labor force. More than 1 of every 8 women in the labor force is head of a family. Among the 3.4 million minority women heading families, 46 percent are in the labor force. More than 1 of every 5 minority women workers is the head of household.

Median income of families headed by women is considerably lower than the median income of husband-wife families: $10,802 compared to $25,065 annually.

Similarly, a substantial gap is evident when comparing the median income of black families headed by women ($7,506) to black families headed by men ($19,624). But these figures do not present the complete picture. One of every three female-headed households, as compared to one of every sixteen married-couple families, is living below the poverty level. Of the 31.8 million persons below the poverty level in 1981, approximately 78 percent (25 million) were women and children. While women maintain about 16% of all families, they maintain 47.5 percent of the families below the poverty level.

Child Care

Child care is a critical issue for women in the work force. Since 1965, the number of pre-school children with working mothers has grown by 65 percent. The National Center for Education Statistics predicts that there will be 10.4 million children under the age of 6 with working mothers in 1990, a 22 percent increase from 1981. The supply of child care lags so far behind the need that approximately one million children under 13 years old have no care while their parents work. The Department of Labor estimates that fewer than 1.5 million spaces in day care centers exist for the 8.5 million pre-school children.

Unfortunately, federal funds for day care were reduced 10-25 percent by cuts in the fiscal year 1981 budget. As a result, the number of children participating in federally funded day care will be reduced by 100,000. In over one-half of the states, the quality of child care has suffered because of higher child/staff ratios and the loss of program staff, equipment and other resources. In all, the cuts will directly affect 900,000 poor and low income children.

Women who head households are affected most by the decrease in quality and quantity of day care. Of all families enrolled in day care, 37 percent are headed by women.

Unemployment

The unemployment rate for women is slightly lower than that for men. The unemployment rate for women at mid-year 1982 was 9.2 percent versus

9.4 percent for men. Black women suffer from unemployment to nearly the same extent as black men. The average unemployment rate for black women is 17.6 percent; the rate for black men is 19.4 percent. These figures are significantly higher than the 8.4 percent unemployment rate for white men.

More families headed by women are affected by unemployment than families headed by men. In 1981, 10.4 percent of all women heading families were unemployed compared to 4.3 percent of men heading families.

SHATTERING THE MYTHS ABOUT WORKING WOMEN

There is a widespread public perception today that the drive for equal rights for working women that began in the early '70's has succeeded. Advertising and the media focus on women who have "made it", creating the myth that the situation for most working women has dramatically improved--that sex discrimination in pay and placement has disappeared. Unfortunately, far too little progress has been made. And the myth that equal opportunity exists makes it more difficult to remove the barriers that still remain. This section examines the facts behind the most common myths about women's economic status.

MYTH: THE WAGE GAP BETWEEN MEN AND WOMEN IS NARROWING.

FACT: The wage gap between men and women is wider than it was 25 years ago. Sixty-seven percent of all female year-round full-time workers earn less than $15,000 compared to only 30.6 percent of all men in the same situation. Less than one-third, 30.9 percent, of employed women earn between $15,000 and $30,000 compared to 48.5 percent of working men; 2 percent make $30,000 and over compared to 20.9 percent of male workers. On the average, women employed full-time are paid three-fifths of men's wages in comparable jobs. The median earnings of full-time women workers are 59 percent of that for men ($12,001 vs. $20,260). This represents a decline from 25 years ago; in 1955, female wages were 64 percent of male wages. Even when adjustments for differences in occupation, education, and work experience are taken into account, the gap does not narrow appreciably.

MYTH: WOMEN WORK TO EARN "EXTRAS".

FACT: Forty-five percent of all working women are single, widowed, divorced or separated. These women must work to provide for themselves and their families. In addition, women who are married increasingly must work to maintain their families' basic standard of living. The two-paycheck family has increased by 25 percent in the past ten years. Now, three of every five husband-wife families include at least two wage earners, with working wives accounting for 36 percent of the families' income. From 1960 to 1980, one-earner households declined from 50 percent to 22 percent. The greatest labor force increases have occurred among married women.

The Department of Labor estimates that a family of four needs $25,407 to maintain a moderate standard of living. Since the average wage for male workers is $20,260, it is obvious that a wife's earnings are critical to the support of millions of families. In fact, only 27 percent of working men earn enough to maintain a moderate standard of living.

Further, the current number of unemployed male heads of families means that many husband-wife families must now rely totally on the wife's earnings to survive.

MYTH: WOMEN AND MEN DOING THE SAME TYPE OF WORK EARN THE SAME PAY.

FACT: In every major occupational group, the earnings of fully employed women lag significantly behind those of men. According to the most recent analysis of weekly earnings of full-time wage and salary workers

by the U. S. Department of Labor, women's weekly earnings are significantly lower than those of men in the same occupations. For example, earnings of females in proportion to males are 72 percent for professionals and technicals, 61 percent for managers and administrators, 67 percent for clericals, 69 percent for service workers, and 52 percent in sales.

Average Weekly Earnings by Sex, 1981

Occupation	1981 Average Weekly Earnings		Women's Salary as a Percent of Men's
	Men	Women	
Sales workers	$366	$190	52%
Blue collar workers	360	239	66
Managers and administrators	466	283	61
Clerical workers	328	220	67
Service workers, except private household	238	170	71
Professional and technical workers	439	316	72

Source: U. S. Department of Labor

In fact, a Department of Labor survey of earnings of full-time wage and salary workers in 100 occupations shows an earnings gap between men and women in every single classification. For example, women lawyers' median weekly earnings are 29 percent less than men's; women personnel and labor relations workers earn 36 percent less than men in this field. Women employed as bank officers and financial managers earn 40 percent less than their male counterparts. In accounting, women earn 29 percent

less than men; women bookkeepers and office machine operators earn 31 percent less than male bookkeepers and office machine operators.

Ratio of Female/Male Earnings in Occupations with Highest Median Weekly Earnings, 1981 Averages

Occupation	Earnings Ratio
Lawyers	71.0%
Physicians	80.9
School administrators, elementary and secondary	69.9
Computer systems analysts	76.9
Health administrators	65.5
Engineers	67.8
Operations and systems researchers and analysts	82.0
Personnel and labor relations workers	64.3

Source: U. S. Department of Labor
Bureau of Labor Statistics

MYTH: WOMEN NOW HAVE ACCESS TO ALL TYPES OF JOBS.

FACT: Occupational segregation is as prevalent today as it was twenty years ago. In 1960, 52 percent of all women were employed in just four occupations: clerks, saleswomen, waitresses and hairdressers. In 1981, 47 percent of all working women could be found in these categories.

Twenty years ago, 12 percent of women were professional and technical workers--over half of these were teachers and nurses. Today, 17 percent

of women work in professional and technical positions--still over half (55 percent) of these are teachers and nurses.

Twenty years ago, 5 percent of working women were managers. Today, only 7 percent are managers.

Twenty years ago, 1 percent of working women were in skilled craft jobs. Today, not quite 2 percent of working women hold these jobs.

Today, nearly two-thirds (64 percent) of working women are classified as clericals, operatives, or service workers. Among the 42.2 million women holding jobs in 1981, 14.6 million were clerical workers; 3.7 million were nurses, health technicians, and health service workers; 2.4 million were teachers; 1.0 million were service workers in private households; and 3.0 million were food service workers.

Occupational Distribution of Working Women

Occupation	1960	1970	1981
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Clerical Workers	30.3	34.5	34.7
Service workers, except private household	14.8	16.5	17.1
Professional and technical workers	12.4	14.5	17.0
Operatives	15.2	14.5	10.4
Managers and administrators	5.0	4.5	7.3
Sales workers	7.7	7.0	6.8
Private household workers	8.9	5.1	2.3
Craft workers	1.0	1.1	1.9
Other	4.3	2.3	2.5

Source: U. S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics

Men, on the other hand, are concentrated in professional, technical, and managerial positions. Only 6 percent of males hold clerical jobs, while 35 percent of working women are clericals, including 3.9 million who are secretaries, stenographers, or typists. Another 19 percent are service workers, 2 percent of whom are women doing household work. In the professional field as a whole, women slightly outrank men--17 percent of all employed women are professionals compared to 16 percent of employed men. However, a full 61 percent of all women professionals are teachers and health workers. These professions command much lower pay than professions such as law, medicine, and engineering, in which more men are found.

In all, women account for 80.5 percent of all clericals in this country, only 27 percent of the managers and administrators, and a mere 6 percent of the craft workers. Women at present are estimated to hold fewer than 1 percent of the directorships of top American corporations, fewer than 1 percent of the top management posts, and approximately 5 percent of all middle management positions.

Another facet of occupational segregation that has remained unchanged is the low pay rates in female-intensive industries.

Highest and Lowest Paying Industries, 1981

	Median weekly earnings	Percent who are women
Highest-paying industries:		
Petroleum and coal products	$433	20%
Mining	423	15
Railroad transportation	422	7
Aircraft and parts manufacture	414	23
Ordnance	410	22
Motor Vehicle and equipment manufacture	407	15
Lowest-paying industries:		
Private households	114	90
Apparel manufacture	170	79
Eating and drinking places	174	55
Leather and leather products	185	61
Personal services	188	59
Agriculture	189	16

Source: U. S. Department of Labor

MYTH: MINORITY WOMEN ARE GETTING AHEAD FASTER BECAUSE THEY BENEFIT DOUBLY FROM AFFIRMATIVE ACTION.

FACT: Minority women are still the victims of double discrimination. They are found most often in the lowest occupational echelons--over 47 percent of them were working as operatives and service workers in 1980, approximately double the proportion for all white men. The proportion of minority women in the professional group was 14 percent.

Black women, for example, are not any better represented in the higher paying job categories than they were in 1972.

Black Women as a Percent of All Employed Persons

By Occupation, 1972 - 1980

Occupation	1972	1980
Professional and Technical	8.0%	8.8%
Managers and Administrators	5.0	5.2
Sales	3.8	4.4
Clerical	7.2	8.9
Service workers, except private household	17.3	15.9
Private household workers	39.8	31.9
Maids and Servants	71.1	52.5
Craft and kindred workers	8.0	8.1
Operatives	12.7	14.6
Transport equipment operatives	9.0	11.2
Laborers, except farm	12.0	12.2
Farm laborers	8.1	7.0

Source: U. S. Department of Labor
Bureau of Labor Statistics

MYTH: WOMEN EARN LESS BECAUSE THEY DON'T STAY IN THE JOB MARKET.

FACT: The average working woman is in the labor force for 28 years. This compares with 38 years for men on the average. In the past twenty years, there has been a marked shift in women's work patterns. Previously, most women only worked for a few years prior to marriage and re-entered the job market only after divorce or widowhood, or in some instances, after their children were grown. Now, 58 percent of mothers with school-age children work.

This earlier pattern of absence from the work force was never true for minority women whose participation in the labor force has remained constant over the past 35 years. And, of course, it was never the pattern for single women.

MYTH: WOMEN DON'T HAVE THE EDUCATION NEEDED TO GET AHEAD.

FACT: Working women have the same average education as working men. As of 1980, both men and women had completed a median of 12.8 years of education. In 1980, women earned 49 percent of the bachelor's degrees, 49.5 percent of the master's degrees, and 30 percent of the doctorate degrees. Women have shown major progress over the past decade in earning degrees in the medical and legal professions.

Percentage of Graduate Degrees Received by Women, 1971 - 1981

	1971	1981
Medicine	9.2%	24.8%
Dentistry	1.2	13.6
Law	7.3	30.2

Source: Scientific Manpower Commission

Women have also made significant strides in science and mathematics.

Percentage of Degrees Earned by Women, 1980

Field	Bachelor's	Master's	Doctoral
Engineering*	10.0%	6.8%	3.2%
Chemistry	28.6	25.8	16.6
Biological Sciences	42.4	37.1	28.0
Geosciences	25.0	20.2	10.2
Agricultural Sciences	29.6	22.4	10.2
Mathematics	42.3	36.1	12.8

Source: Scientific Manpower Commission
* 1981 Data

However, women earn less than men with comparable educational backgrounds. On the average, female high school graduates earn 39 percent less than male high school graduates. Women with college degrees earn 35 percent less than men with college degrees, and women with advanced degrees earn 29 percent less than their male counterparts. In fact, female college graduates earn on the average almost $800 less per year than male high school drop-outs.

Median Weekly Earnings in 1981 of
Full-Time Workers by Educational Attainment and Sex*

High School	Women	Men
1-3 Years	$187	$314
4 Years	222	363
College Degree	299	459

* Persons 25 years old and older.

Source: U. S. Department of Commerce, Census Bureau

MYTH: THE LARGE INFLUX OF WOMEN INTO THE LABOR FORCE IS THE CAUSE OF HIGH UNEMPLOYMENT.

FACT: Currently, there are six million men who are unemployed and 4.5 million women. For women to be the cause of male unemployment, the large number of women who are now in the labor force would have had to take jobs traditionally held by men. In fact, the vast majority of women take clerical jobs in part because they are excluded from most male-dominated fields. Current unemployment rates among men are caused by reductions in male-dominated blue-collar jobs, especially in manufacturing and construction.

If all of the women now holding jobs were to leave the work force to make room for all the unemployed males, this would leave tens of millions of jobs vacant.

THE CRISIS IN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY ENFORCEMENT

The foregoing facts about women's economic status make clear that economic equality for women is far from a reality. Sex discrimination continues to be deeply embedded in corporate policies and in individual attitudes and practices. The facts demonstrate that despite all the public attention focused on this issue, far too little progress has been made by either the corporations themselves or through government enforcement of equal opportunity requirements. The past ten years have shown that too few corporations are willing to engage voluntarily in meaningful programs to eliminate sex discrimination in their employment practices. Where voluntary programs do exist, real progress is far too slow. The past ten years have also shown that the improvements that have been made can be attributed to pressure created by the enforcement of equal opportunity laws and regulations by the federal government. Unfortunately, these enforcement programs are currently under attack by corporations and the Reagan administration. New agency policies and regulatory proposals are designed to undermine existing enforcement mechanisms, and crippling budget cuts are reducing the agencies' ability to operate.

The attack on federal equal opportunity enforcement has seriously affected the major agencies charged with eliminating employment discrimination. The Department of Labor's Office of Federal Contract Compliance (OFCCP) enforces Executive Order 11246 (as amended) which forbids discrimination by federal contractors and requires them to undertake affirmative action in hiring, promotion, pay, and training for women

and minorities. This regulation covers approximately 29,000 contractors who employ 31 million persons (one-third of the labor force), and involves over $80 billion in federal contracts. Contract compliance regulations provide for sanctions, including back pay for victims of discrimination and debarment from future contracts, against contractors who fail to comply with their obligation to provide equal opportunity. Settlements reached through contract compliance enforcement have resulted in the entry of women into the construction industry, coal mining, professional and executive positions in the financial industry, and higher-paying positions in educational institutions--all areas previously closed to them. Perhaps the most dramatic example is the coal industry. In 1973, .001 percent of those working in the mines were women; by 1979, 11.4 percent were women. In the banking industry in 1970, 17.6 percent of bank officials and financial managers were women; by 1979, the percentage was 31.6. During that period, both industries were the target of major enforcement efforts because of their discriminatory practices. The threat of sanctions through contract compliance enforcement was the catalyst for these improvements.

It is clear that the current attack on the contract compliance enforcement program will seriously damage efforts to make progress toward equal opportunity. Reagan administration proposals would eliminate equal opportunity requirements for 75 percent of all federal contractors, reduce back pay requirements, and weaken existing affirmative action rules. If these new proposals are enacted, hard-won gains made through contract compliance enforcement will come to a halt. Back pay awards

have already been reduced by 50 percent, and compliance review activity has fallen to its lowest level in six years.

The other major agency charged with combatting employment discrimination is the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC). This agency enforces Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 which forbids discrimination in hiring, pay, promotion and other terms and conditions of employment in the private and public sectors. The agency has negotiated substantial settlements with major employers, and in such cases, has required the employers to provide back pay for victims of discrimination, training and promotion programs, non-discriminatory hiring practices, and other remedies for discrimination. The agency is also charged with handling complaints by individuals against their employers.

Like the OFCCP, the EEOC is under severe attack by the Reagan administration. Top positions have remained vacant for months at a time, personnel have been shuffled and reshuffled, and many of the appointees who have been named by Reagan have been either hostile to the agency's mission or incompetent. Reagan's first nominee for Chairman of the agency was the object of such strong bi-partisan criticism that the nomination was withdrawn. The position was without a confirmed appointee until eighteen months after Reagan took office. The administration's first appointee to the post of general counsel was widely criticized for bias toward employers; he came to the EEOC from General Motors where he defended the corporation against a major EEOC complaint. Ultimately, he was forced to resign. Constant

personnel changes in other top agency posts have contributed to the confusion that now characterizes the EEOC's operations.

Current agency reorganization is likely to bury the EEOC's program to combat systemic discrimination (company-wide patterns that affect large numbers of employees). This program is essential if the EEOC is to make any impact beyond individual cases. Other restructuring will downgrade critical EEOC functions in the areas of policy implementation and interagency coordination. During previous administrations, the EEOC took the lead in defining and expanding the scope of Title VII protections, including its definition of sexual harassment as a form of sex discrimination.

During the Carter administration, massive revamping of the agency's apparatus brought substantial enforcement activity. In fiscal year 1980, for example, 13,580 individual cases were settled and the average benefit was $3400. That activity has dropped off dramatically. Far fewer individual cases are being settled through conciliation; the average benefit to victims of discrimination has dropped over 40 percent.

Corporations have joined in the attack on the federal enforcement agencies. They have taken the opportunities presented by the Reagan administration to lobby more vigorously for reduced enforcment. They charge that in recent years the EEOC and OFCCP have become adversarial with employers and overly sympathetic toward complainants. They complain that corporations have been subjected to harassment by over-zealous officials. In fact, this is simply their reaction to strong government action required to uphold equal opportunity laws.

Adversarial relationships are bound to result when corporations found to have discriminated refuse to remedy the situation. Other corporate lobbyists cynically use statistics showing how little progress has been made toward equal opportunity to argue that the agencies do not work and therefore should be abolished. Yet only a handful of employers have developed the kinds of voluntary equal opportunity programs that could produce meaningful results.

The assault on equal opportunity enforcement constitutes a de facto reversal of a national commitment made in the 1960's to eliminate employment discrimination. The damage currently being done to the federal equal opportunity enforcement mechanisms will set back efforts toward that goal for years to come.

THE OUTLOOK FOR WORKING WOMEN

According to U. S. Department of Labor projections, the numbers of women who work will continue to increase markedly during the 1980's reaching between 56.5 and 59.9 million by the year 1990. Women will account for two-thirds of the total growth in the civilian labor force which means that by 1990, 60-63 percent of all women will be working.

The vast majority of women will continue to be employed in service and clerical jobs. The latest projections from the Department of Labor still show that service workers will be the fastest growing occupational group and that clerical occupations will account for more jobs than any other occupational group. The statistics do show a small trend away from women's extreme underrepresentation in some job categories. For example, from 1975 to 1981, the proportion of women in lower-paying service jobs dropped from approximately 22 percent to 19 percent. This category, which includes such traditional "female" jobs as private household workers, nurses' aides, and waitresses, accounted for only about 10 percent of the period's net increase in employment among women. At the same time, the share of women working in professional, technical, and managerial jobs advanced from 21.6 percent to 24.3 percent, and these occupations accounted for 35 percent of the net increase in women's employment.

However, unless concrete steps are taken to expand women's job opportunities, occupational segregation will continue to be the major

trend for the future. Most women will be in the lowest paying jobs with few opportunities for advancement. Some have argued that as women gain greater seniority, more experience, and more education, economic equality for women will be achieved automatically and the wage gap will disappear. Unfortunately, the facts indicate otherwise. Women have gained seniority, experience, and education over the past twenty years, yet the wage gap has widened and occupational segregation has remained unchanged.

If women are ever to achieve equality at work, the national commitment to equal opportunity must be reaffirmed. Equal opportunity laws must be strengthened and enforced vigorously. Employers must undertake comprehensive programs to eliminate discriminatory patterns and practices which continue to deny women equal pay and equal opportunity. Only then will the principle of economic equality for working women have a chance of becoming a reality.

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